

THE ADVOCATE

Celebrating Opportunities Conference in March Hosted by New Mexico Every Four Years

The Celebrating Opportunities for Hispanic Students Conference began sixteen years ago as a collaborative conference among Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas school boards associations to make the educational atmosphere in those states' public schools better for our Hispanic students. The conference has expanded to include all issues of improving student achievement for all students. This year, the event is being held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the Albuquerque Hotel in Old Town (Formerly the Sheraton Old Town) Friday March 23 through Sunday March 25, 2007.

This conference generally has a total of about 400 participants coming from all four states. Participants include board members, teachers, administrators, community members and parents. The feature that sets this conference apart from all others is that there are breakout sessions that are model programs from these state's districts. The presenters share unique programs with specific information that can be replicated in other districts seeking student improvement. The program booklet lists the school district, district profile, cost of maintaining the program, a program narrative and contact information. The model program format helps districts share information and learn about new strategies for delivery services to the changing student population. Seven districts from New Mexico have submitted model programs for presentation at the conference.

There will also be a keynote speaker each of the three days. On Friday morning, Rudolfo Anaya, retired UNM Professor and author of *Bless Me, Ultima* will speak. On Saturday morning, Dr. Lowell Catlett, an economist, futurist and professor at New Mexico State University will speak. On Sunday, after the Mariachi Mass, there will be an inspiring presentation entitled "Homeboy goes to Harvard".

There will be a student panel presentation on Saturday during the plated luncheon from 12:30 to 2:00 pm. The student representatives will be: female high school student from New Mexico; female undergraduate college student from Arizona; male graduate student from Texas; and a young male professional from California. Each one will share their educational goals, successes and some obstacles they have overcome.

There is still time to submit suggestions to NMSBA for student entertainment. If you have talented students you would like to have perform at the Albuquerque conference, e-mail the student talent/group name, adult contact person's daytime number, your name, your school district and your daytime number to us at nmsba1@nm.net no later than January 31st.

Registration materials, agenda information and maps to the hotel are available directly from the NMSBA website at www.nmsba.org. Registration begins now! Don't miss this opportunity to attend this valuable conference in your own state.

New Mexico school board members attending this conference will be able to earn mandated training hours.



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DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By Joe Mack Mitchell

First of all, let me say a big, "Thank you!" to those of you who forged through the bitter cold to get to the Annual Convention in Albuquerque on December 1st and 2nd. It was nice to see all of you again and refresh all the acquaintances again. Many times during the year, I tend to forget that there are a large number of volunteers working hard to help keep school districts on track.



When I have an opportunity to see most of you in one place, it gives me a warm feeling (well, maybe not warm, but definitely peaceful).

At the Board of Directors meeting at that conference, they discussed a couple of issue that are important to the membership; region meetings and the Board Institute. I will try to elaborate on what they decided and what some of the issues are with those two areas.

Before I do that, let me explain why they were discussing these two issues. At the Leaders' Retreat last July, the Presidents of local boards and the Board of Directors did some Association planning by discussing all of the areas in which the Association is involved. The two areas that drew the most discussion were region meetings and the Board Institute.

After some discussion, the Board decided to appoint committees to discuss the issues and make some recommendations. Those on the Region meetings committee are: Lora Harlan - Clovis; Donna Archuleta - Cimarron; Mavis Price - Gallup; David Zimmerman - Questa; and Lilliemae Ortiz - Pojoaque. Those on the Board Institute committee are: Vicki Smith - Cobre; Susan Lutterman - Ruidoso; Chuck Davis - Las Cruces; Dean Pecotte - Farmington; Patrick Romero - Las Vegas City; and Lilliemae Ortiz - Pojoaque. As of now, we are still trying to decide when the committees will meet.

So here are the issues, and you can give input by sharing your feelings with one of the committee members.

Region Meetings: The regions are large, should we try to either have more regions or should we re-organize the ones we have? Should the programs or format of the region meetings be changed? For example, should the Executive Board decide what the program will be and have the same program at every meeting? Currently, the meeting program is decided by the host Superintendent and the Region President. Should we have fewer meetings? Should the meetings we have be longer or shorter? Currently, we allow members from one district to attend a meeting in another region if it is closer, and they so choose to do that.

Board Institute: Should we do away with the visit to the legislature? If we do away with the legislative visit, we could move the meeting to a more centrally located venue, such as Albuquerque. Some say the legislative visit is a waste of time and the time we have our conference. Should we move our conference to late January? Should we focus more on NEW board members? The main program for this upcoming Institute is set, so there won't be many changes in format for it. However, we are planning for years to come and trying to make the region meetings and the Board Institute for user friendly for our members.

THE ADVOCATE

The mission of *The Advocate* is to provide information to the members of the New Mexico School Boards Association.

Articles published in *The Advocate* represent the ideas or beliefs of the respective writers and are not necessarily the views of the NMSBA unless otherwise noted.

The Advocate is the official publication of the NMSBA and is published quarterly. *The Advocate* is supported by membership dues and is sent to all school board members and superintendents of its member districts as well as education stakeholders. Non-profit postage paid in Santa Fe, NM.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit article submissions for clarity and length. Deadlines falling on a holiday or weekend will be extended to the next business day. The deadline for submissions is 4 PM:

Winter Issue - December 10th
Spring Issue - March 10th
Summer Issue - June 10th
Fall Issue - September 10th

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

By Lora Harlan

Welcome to **SWEET SUCCESSES!**

I believe the coming year will be full of **success**. I look forward to sharing it with you. There is much to be done if we can truly educate our students in a way that prepares them to be **successful**, productive citizens – life long learners. This year as we travel the road together is no exception.

We must overcome many challenges.

- Declining and exploding enrollment depending on your geographic location
- Capital outlay that must meet the needs of facilities and infrastructure across the state
- Violence that is invading our campuses
- Testing and the results that bring praise or sanctions but do not necessarily tell the true story of the **success** students achieve every day
- Being flexible in our teaching methods to give each child the best opportunity for **success**
- Losing our local autonomy that allow districts – boards, superintendents and administrators - the flexibility to best address the needs of our local students and the programs that will make them **successful**.



These challenges are on going and each of you has been elected to represent your community, and that puts you in a state and national political arena that has direct impact on how you conduct “school” business. The 2007 Legislative Session will give us opportunity to effect legislation that will have a positive impact on public education. I challenge you to be an advocate for **success** in Santa Fe.

So how do all these challenges connect with **Sweet Success** you ask? As we work on the challenges, I want to share the **success** you are having with your students, in your classrooms, in your districts. I want to take every opportunity this year to celebrate these **Sweet Successes**. Identifying traits might be:

- Individual students who reached an ‘ah ha’ moment and are enjoying **success** at a whole new level.
- Classroom teachers that have particular **success** in their classroom.
- A new building/facility that will offer greater access to students for enriching their learning **successes**.
- Community groups or individuals that make ‘**successes**’ possible through their support and involvement.

Tell me your stories.

Send me your pictures.

They are worth their weight in gold. — The treasure of a **successful** public education system that teaches all students.

We will show the pictures at our convention and conferences. We will print your stories in Advocate. We will post them on the NSBA sponsored website –The Center for Public Education.

I want to hear from you. My email address is loralibrarian@yahoo.com Use it to send me your stories and your photos. Remember a picture is often worth a thousand words.

As partners we will face the challenges and tell our **success** stories. We have much to be proud of in public education in New Mexico. Let’s savor our ‘**Sweet Successes**’.

Blessings to you all.

Lora

(See page 5 for a “Sweet Success” story)

2006 NMSBA Annual Convention



The 2006 NMSBA Board of Education of the Year was Deming Public Schools. Pictured are: (L to R) Tony Sayre, Secretary; Robert Orosco; Anne Keeler, Vice-President; Ruben Torres, President; and David McSherry.



Ruben Torres (center) received the 2006 NMSBA 24-Year Service Award. The 2005-06 Executive Board is pictured around him: (L to R) Vicki Smith, Lora Harlan, Donna Archuleta and Joe Price.

The New Mexico School Board Association Annual Convention was held December 1-2, 2006 at the Marriott in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Over 300 school board members, superintendents and education stakeholders participated in the conference.

The keynote speaker Friday morning was Katheryn Gemberling, Educational Consultant. She co-authored the NSBA book, **Key Work Guidebook**, the best-selling publication designed to assist school boards in their critical role of improving student achievement. Her two-part presentation was on "Data-Driven Leadership: The Key to Improving Student Achievement". For the Second General Session, Dr. Peter Winograd, Director and Beata Thorstensen, Senior Policy Analyst of the New Mexico Office of Accountability presented "Accountability Literacy for School Boards".

After lunch on Friday, the Delegate Assembly met. NMSBA was fortunate to have Jane Gallucci, the national association president at the conference. Her evening flight was delayed due to weather, but she arrived that afternoon and was able to give some warm greetings from NSBA and to share the information regarding the Center for Public Education website and NSBA's "Pledge to America's School children campaign". See page 10 for more detailed information on both of these.

The Nominations report was shared and the officer elections were held. Lilliemae Ortiz (Pojoaque) moved into the office of Immediate Past-President; Lora Harlan (Clovis) moved into the office of President; Donna Archuleta (Cimarron) moved into the office of President-Elect; Mavis Price (Gallup-McKinley) was elected to the office of Vice-President; and David Zimmerman (Questa) was elected to the office of Secretary-Treasurer. Each term of office is one year in length. With special thanks we recognize our two outgoing officers, Vicki Smith (Cobre) and Joe Price (Aztec) for their continued service and support of NMSBA. Special thanks also go out to our door prize contributor, Al Clemmons of George K. Baum and Company for donating ten

Continued on page 11



Steve Harkey of Carrizozo (center) received the 2006 NMSBA Board Member of the Year Award. The 2005-06 Executive Board is pictured around him: (L to R) Vicki Smith, Lora Harlan, Donna Archuleta and Joe Price.



The two members earning their Master Board Member blazers at the Convention were Victor Ortiz and Dorothy Armijo of Pecos ISD.



Some other VIPs present at the NMSBA Annual Dinner were: (L to R) Joe Price (05-06 Sec'y-Treasurer); Lora Harlan (06-07 President); Donna Archuleta (06-07 President-Elect); Jane Gallucci (06-07 NSBA President); Lilliemae Ortiz (06-07 Immediate Past President); David Zimmerman (06-07 Sec'y-Treasurer); Mavis Price (06-07 Vice-President); Vicki Smith (05-06 Immediate Past President); and Randy Manning (Past President and NSBA Western Region Board of Director member).

Sweet Success Story

“Joe’s Story”

Three years ago Joe enrolled in eighth grade with low self esteem and a long history of acting out against other students and staff. These negative behaviors continued and the school staff decided to make Joe one of their “projects.”

Teachers, coaches, and the mental health counselor came up with a plan to help Joe become more successful. It took many efforts but Joe began to realize that he had many adults on his side.

At the beginning of his ninth grade year, Joe went out for football. He went to practice everyday and worked hard to keep his grades up and remain eligible to play. Joe’s negative behaviors became increasingly few and far between. In the fourth quarter of the last game of the season, Joe scored a touchdown. His teammates and coaches were ecstatic and praised Joe for his outstanding effort. The look on this young man’s face was priceless. He had experienced **success** in a public venue and earned the respect of those around him. During the rest of the year, Joe – a young man with a history of assaulting students and staff both verbally and physically – this student was only sent to the office twice for minor violations – tardy. (Considering the fact that this young man had a history of assaulting students and staff both verbally and physically) – two tardy referrals seemed like nothing!

At the 9th grade awards and promotion assembly, Joe was honored by his history teacher as the Outstanding History Student for her class.

Joe transitioned to high school. He became involved in ROTC and continued to play football. At this time, Joe has no discipline referrals and is passing all of his classes.

The most amazing part of this story is that Joe is a special education student. This **success** story was made possible by many caring adults who gave a young man a vision that he could make it in this world. Joe grabbed on to that vision and is still working hard to achieve it. Unfortunately for educators, a story like Joe’s is not measured on the SBA test or counted toward making AYP. But I guarantee you, Joe’s success is much more important than passing a standardized test.

(Story’s like this are not unique across our state and nation. Many caring educators help students like Joe everyday. In this day and age of negative comments and publicity, be thankful that people still care enough to enter the field of education and truly make difference in a child’s life.)

Questions About Training Points

Throughout the month of December, many members called the office with questions regarding how certificates are earned each year at the Annual Convention. The level I - Leadership Achievement (24 hours) and level II - Outstanding Leadership (36 hours) awards are cumulative. Once you earn them, you don’t get another certificate for them.

The Exemplary Award is annual - it is given to members for 20+ hours earned per year. This award was developed to recognize those who went well beyond the state-mandated requirement of 5 hours of training per year. The number of points required for “Exemplary” distinction are determined by the Board of Directors.

Just a reminder that points are tracked from September 1 through August 31 each year. Quarterly reports are faxed to Superintendents and President’s receive a report in May.

The NSBA changed the platform from which NMSBA was utilizing the Online Learning Center in computer-based courses for individually-paced learning. The technical difficulties are still being worked out within the new system.

If you have any unresolved concerns regarding your training, please feel free to call Elizabeth Egelhoff at the NMSBA office - (505) 983-5041.

NMSBA REGIONS & 2007 SPRING MEETINGS

Region I

Wednesday, May 16 in Gallup

Aztec, Bloomfield, Central, Dulce,
Farmington, Gallup, Zuni

Region II

Thursday, March 8 in Questa

Chama Valley, Espanola, Jemez Mountain,
Los Alamos, Mesa Vista, Pecos, Penasco,
Pojoaque Valley, Questa, Santa Fe, Taos

Region III

Monday, April 30 in Mosquero

Cimarron, Clayton, Des Moines, Las
Vegas City, Las Vegas West, Maxwell,
Mora, Mosquero, Raton, Roy, Santa Rosa,
Springer, Wagon Mound

Region IV

Wednesday, April 25 in Estancia

Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Grants-
Cibola, Cuba, Estancia, Jemez Valley, Los
Lunas, Magdalena, Moriarty, Mountainair,
Quemado, Rio Rancho, Socorro, Vaughn

Region V

Tuesday, March 20 in Fort Sumner

Clovis, Dora, Elida, Floyd, Fort Sumner,
Grady, House, Logan, Melrose, Portales,
San Jon, Texico, Tucumcari

Region VI

Monday, April 23 in Loving

Artesia, Carlsbad, Dexter, Eunice,
Hagerman, Hobbs, Jal, Lake Arthur,
Loving, Lovington, Roswell, Tatum

Region VII

Tuesday, April 24 in Gadsden

Alamogordo, Capitan, Carrizozo,
Cloudcroft, Corona, Gadsden, Hatch
Valley, Hondo Valley, Las Cruces,
Ruidoso, T or C, Tularosa

Region VIII

Wednesday, May 2 in Silver City

Animas, Cobre, Deming, Lordsburg,
Reserve, Silver City

**Indicates a change from previously published information*

Tag: Schools try to discourage the game, but it endures — for good reason.

As school administrators wrestle with the deeply controversial issues of educating America's youth — evolution versus creationism, metal detectors on campus, standardized testing — one topic has really put them in the public hot seat: the schoolyard game of tag.

The issue made national headlines recently when Willett Elementary School in Attleboro, Mass., officially banned the venerable skinner of knees, inspiring considerable derision in editorials and online discussion boards. (Schools in South Carolina, Wyoming and Washington have instituted similar bans.)

The topic is so no-win that school officials, admittedly busy with loftier issues, are reluctant to discuss it.

But the reality is that schools across the United States have been quietly discouraging tag for years. Any discussion of it elicits a flinch response because this simple schoolyard game is at the nexus of three competing interests: giving kids freedom to play (what many teachers and kids want), keeping them safe from harm on large, unruly playgrounds (what concerned parents want) and avoiding band-aid-related depositions (what all administrators want).

Doug Slonkosky, principal of Van Buren Elementary school in Placentia, is a brave man. He was willing to go on the record that Van Buren discourages tag.

At big schools like Van Buren, which has 720 students, having masses of kids careening off each other as if they were errant billiard balls presents a genuine problem. Kids playing tag interfere with organized physical education classes, he says, and the games sometimes degenerate into kids running up and poking or hitting other students.

"Instead," Slonkosky says, "we incorporate the principles of tag into chasing games, such as touch football."

Although the Los Angeles Unified School District doesn't ban tag, many individual schools, which are free to adopt their own policy based on the needs of the school, have chosen to limit it. For example, in LAUSD's Local District 4, which covers nearly 100,000 students in the downtown basin, tag isn't banned but it's discouraged, says Richard Alonzo, the district superintendent. The reasons, he adds, are purely practical.

The game can bring out aggression in some kids and lead to confrontation. Today's campuses are often paved with blacktop, not cushioned with grass; and schools have had to cut back on supervisory aides because of funding problems.

"Why would we want to encourage a game that may lead to more injuries and confrontation among students?" Alonzo says.

Despite recent furor, the restrictions on tag are not new, says Alonzo. As far back as the late 1980s, when he was a school principal, the school discouraged it, for much the same reasons.

Andrew Rakos, general manager of Fountain Day School in West Hollywood, with 175 students, believes the socializing benefits of tag outweigh the dangers of lawsuits, particularly at relatively small schools like his.

"Tag is about learning how to compete in a fair and joyous way," says Rakos. "There's an element of being safe, of avoiding trouble, strategy. You learn about how to deal with

disagreements and how to find solutions. And of course you learn about your personal space and about speed and control of your body."

Charlene Burgeson, executive director of the National Assn. for Sport and Physical Education, thinks the real value of tag is much simpler.

A game like tag keeps children moderately to vigorously active, says Burgeson, at a time when kids are putting in more TV-viewing time than ever.

But tag proponents should take heart. Tag is a uniquely elemental game that develops naturally — and kids seem to be hard-wired to play it. At age 4 or 5, children are running around chasing each other, and by the first grade, they've created the rules and organized themselves into a game. "It's one of the few games left where the adults have absolutely nothing to do with it," says psychologist Fred Frankel, director of the UCLA Parent Training and Children's Friendship Programs. "Kids transmit it from generation to generation and spontaneously organize it."

● *Source: By Janet Cromley, Times Staff Writer, LA Times - November 2006*

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New Mexico Teacher of the Year

Dulce Elementary teacher **Tamra Tiong** was named the 2007 New Mexico Teacher of the Year. Tamra received her nomination and award for outstanding teaching strategies, her contribution to professional development, and her community involvement. Tamra is the kindergarten through 2nd grade special education teacher at Dulce Elementary on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation in Northwest New Mexico. She has been at the school for four years and teaching for eight years.

Milken National Educator Award

Reid Nunn is a fourth/fifth-grade multi-age classroom teacher at McCollum Elementary in the **Albuquerque Public Schools**. Mr. Nunn is committed to using the Baldrige Criteria to create a process of continuous improvement in his classroom and has been a member of the State Strengthening Quality in Schools (SQS) Team. Mr. Nunn has also been chairperson of the School Leadership Team, leading the school’s drive for growth through professional development, mentorship in Baldrige and the inception of goal groups. He also spearheaded the use of Access to Learn as the short-cycle assessment for grades one to five at the school and is chairperson of the school’s Math Goal Group since 2004. His principal also noted his “use of kid-friendly standards, rubrics and data-tracking as a direct result of his professional development commitment.”

International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF)

The 2007 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) is coming to Albuquerque. The event brings 1,400 of the brightest, young scientists from around the world to compete in the most significant science endeavor available to pre-college students (9th-12th grades). ISEF is planned for Albuquerque during the week of May 13th-19th, 2007. This event will rank in the top 5 largest conventions to ever be held in Albuquerque, both in size and financial impact.

Science Fair Stars

Susannah Clary, 14 of **Los Lunas** high school a (2005 and 2006 International Science and Engineering Fair competitor from the NM region) traveled to British Columbia at the request of BC fisheries industry this past summer to test her hypothesis on native ocean salmon. Susannah developed a formula and subsequently a provisionally patented device that determines the sex of salmon before they develop secondary sex characteristics – a feat which had never been accomplished in the history of the fishing industry. British Columbia’s salmon industry has seen a huge decline in the salmon population and hopes that Susannah’s formula/device will help them determine whether or not the problem stems from something specific to the to the male or female of the species. Susannah started her project in the 5th grade and is continuing to build on her original idea!

National Teachers Hall of Fame

Pat S. Graff of La Cueva High School in **Albuquerque** was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame after almost thirty years of meritorius service in teaching. Graff is the first NM teacher to receive this honor. Throughout her career Graff has received numerous awards for her hard work as an English, Journalism and Social Studies teacher. In 2004, she received the Governor’s Award for Outstanding New Mexico Woman.

Gov. Richardson Announces Plan for Statewide E-Learning Program

Governor Richardson is planning for a statewide e-learning program that invests in technology and new opportunities for New Mexicans to access school programs no matter where they are in the state.

The program, called Innovative Digital Education and Learning in New Mexico, or IDEAL-NM, calls for a \$10.8 million investment next year to start the program and leverage existing technology initiatives to provide a coordinated effort. About \$28 million will be invested over five years to maintain the program. IDEAL-NM leverages several existing technology initiatives and provides a coordinated program infrastructure.

The Governor’s plans include a common statewide platform or managing system, hosting services, and a statewide cyber academy that would act as a coordinated service center.

“We envision every school district having a cyber academy like the one in Rio Rancho, where students meet, with supervision, and use a block of time every day to take classes over the Internet,” Governor Richardson told students during a visit to the Rio Rancho Cyber Academy. “They would choose from courses offered at other schools, school districts or colleges – but coordinated through the New Mexico Learning Network. They would work at their own pace, and be tested at the end of the course.”

The Governor pointed out that the IDEAL-NM project would also:

- ◆ Reduce the cost of software to schools and state agencies that participate by aligning efforts and pooling resources.
- ◆ Increase access to technology by providing more classes, on-line tutoring, and highly qualified teachers. It is anticipated that IDEAL-NM will have a major impact and within 5 years, all students graduating from a New Mexico high school will have experience with at least one on-line course. The project aims to serve a more diverse student population like advanced, remedial, special education, and home bound students.
- ◆ Facilitate more cooperation between districts, schools, higher education institutions and state agencies. The initiative is expected to encourage cooperation among schools including post-secondary institutions.

● *Source: Office of the Governor, October 2006*

Two New Mexico Students Recognized as AP State Scholars

In November, two New Mexico high school students received AP State Scholar Awards based on their outstanding performance on the Advanced Placement Program Examinations. They were: **Christian E. Free** from **Rio Rancho** High School and **Jordan R. Clark** from **Carlsbad** High School. Free is continuing his educational studies at Harvard University and Clark is a student at Duke University.

Reality Check 2006 Focuses on Education Perceptions - Federal Officials and Local School Leaders at Odds on Terrain and Tactics

Superintendents' perspectives are different from teachers on key issues — 62% of teachers say kids are slipping through the system without learning; only 27% of superintendents think so. - What does it say about the prospects for improving public education when Washington officials and local school heads are operating with very different assumptions about what schools need? Or when the assessments of teachers and superintendents on how many kids are passing through the system without learning the basics are diametrically opposed? New surveys from Public Agenda show major disconnects between the priorities of national policy-makers versus those of local school leaders on issues like teacher quality, standards and the need to ramp up science and math coursework. In "Reality Check 2006: Issue No. 4: The Insiders" (the fourth report issued this year in the Reality Check 2006 series), Public Agenda found that even when they see the same problems, the two groups seem to strive for different solutions.

Yes It Is, No It's Not - While 60% of principals say they are "very satisfied" with the teachers in their school and most superintendents (56%) believe the quality of new teachers is improving, federal officials enforcing No Child Left Behind said in Summer 2006 that not a single state in the nation has yet met its benchmarks for insuring more qualified teachers. And while just more than half of the nation's superintendents consider local schools to be "excellent" and relatively few (23%) say low standards are a serious problem where they work, the DOE says only 10 states have testing systems that meet its standards. Ironically, healthy majorities of superintendents (64%) and principals (67%) say one of the best ways to help them be better school leaders would be to reduce red tape and bureaucracy associated with school mandates like No Child Left Behind. School leaders' upbeat views of the schools also significantly differ from those of another key constituency: teachers in classrooms. School superintendents are substantially less likely than teachers to believe that too many students pass through the system without learning. While the majority of teachers (62%) say this is a serious problem in local schools, just 27% of superintendents think so. In another question in the survey, less than half of superintendents (46%) consider it essential to involve teachers more directly in setting school policy, although principals (65%) were more inclined to do so.

Is Math & Science a Problem? Would Merit Pay or Alternative Certification Help? - Despite a vigorous campaign by business leaders calling for more math and science education, the President's American Competitiveness Initiative, continuing disappointing scores for American students on international math tests and a much discussed shortage of qualified math and science teachers, 66 percent of principals and 59 percent of superintendents say math and science education is not a serious problem or not a problem at all in their district. About one-third of principals and 40% of superintendents say it is a "somewhat" or "very" serious problem in their district. And while many reformers have called for new mechanisms for improving teacher quality such as merit pay and alternative certification, only small percentages of principals and superintendents voice much interest in these ideas. To them, improving professional development opportunities and eliminating teacher tenure are much higher priorities. Only 4% of superintendents say relying more heavily on alternative certification programs would be a "very effective" means of improving teacher quality and only 20% say tying teacher rewards and sanctions to their students' performance would do the trick. Many more say

eliminating teacher tenure (43%) and increasing professional development opportunities (57%) would be "very effective." "With such vastly different sets of perceptions, you really have to wonder whether these people are working at cross purposes," Jean Johnson, Executive Director of Public Agenda's Education Insights division and an author of the report said. "Federal officials see widespread problems; local school officials say the situation is pretty good. Business leaders say reforming math and science education is urgent; local school officials put it fairly far down the list. It's probably natural for principals and superintendents to be upbeat about their institutions and employees, but still, I think the positive, almost buoyant outlook captured here may come as a surprise to a lot of school reformers and critics."

Changing Self-Perceptions - The survey does suggest that local schools leaders are taking on new challenges. At one time, school administrators mainly managed the budget, insured that schools obeyed state and federal education regulations, worked to keep the local school board happy and, of course, were expected to be the loudest cheerleaders at school sporting events. Now, they are expected to be academic leaders and change agents who should be held accountable for increasing student learning overall and especially for improving academic achievement among minority and at-risk students. Reality Check shows school leaders embracing their more academic role. The vast majority say the most essential aspects of their jobs are: ensuring that teachers use effective teaching methods (92% of principals; 87% of superintendents); recruiting the best teachers to their schools (91% of principals; 90% of superintendents); offering sound professional development (89% of principals; 91% of superintendents); and knowing how to use student data to improve teaching (84% of principals; 90% of superintendents). - Principals and Superintendents are not simply accepting the status quo, and have a change agenda of their own. School leaders place getting more funding for schools at the very top of their list. They also have their sights set on other targets like making it easier to remove problem teachers even if they have tenure and reducing federal bureaucracy and red tape.

Much Less Enthusiasm for Teachers in Poor, Minority Districts - There are significant differences in the judgments of school leaders in poor, minority districts versus those in affluent white areas. While more than 6 in 10 superintendents in affluent districts are "very satisfied" with their teachers, just 31% of superintendents in poorer districts say this. Still, even school leaders in poor, minority districts say that schools today are better than when they went to school.

About "Reality Check 2006" - "Reality Check 2006" is a set of public opinion tracking surveys on important issues in public education. From 1998 through 2002, Public Agenda conducted an annual survey of parents, teachers, students, employers and college professors covering standards, testing and accountability. In 2005 and 2006, Public Agenda revised and updated these surveys to cover a broader range of issues, including high school reform, school leadership, teacher preparation and quality, school funding and other issues. The tracking survey will be repeated periodically as a service of Public Agenda's Education Insights initiative. Funding for "Reality Check" was provided by the GE Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and The Wallace Foundation. - For the full report go to: http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=101

Sage Tips From a Veteran Board Member

Step down from the “soap box” as fast as you can. The campaign is over and the election has been held.

- ◆ Listen, listen carefully, and listen with discrimination.
- ◆ Listen for silence, too.
- ◆ Your greatest education will be your first year on the board. Go slowly and be patient. I found it helpful to just listen and absorb during my first year.
- ◆ You are one member of the board. Your principal duty is to formulate policy pertaining to the district.
- ◆ Always be aware that, apart from the board meeting, you are a local citizen and official business can only be acted upon at board meetings.
- ◆ It is wise to remember board members are not educators. Board members should and need to leave the details to the hired administrative staff. However, you will have knowledge and background on certain issues that other board members may not possess. Your contribution can be a positive one in this respect.
- ◆ “Local control” is very important and essential to success of the school district. This legislative issue is becoming more and more critical as federal and state governments attempt to influence education.

Do your homework before the board meeting and read, read, and read some more.

- ◆ It may take a while to know what questions to ask. When you listen, don’t be afraid or embarrassed to reveal your need for basic information prior to make decisions.
- ◆ Research all aspects of a problem before expressing your opinion or making a decision.
- ◆ Trust your judgment and be informed.

Reality Check article continued...

Methodology - The findings in “Reality Check 2006: The Insiders” are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 254 school district superintendents and 252 school principals, 721 public school teachers and 1,379 parents of children now in public school. Interviews with principals, superintendents and teachers were conducted between November 19, 2005 - March 7, 2006 and interviews with parents were conducted between October 30 - December 18, 2005. The margin of error for principals and superintendents is plus or minus 6 percentage points; the margin of error for the sample of teachers is plus or minus 4 percentage points; and the margin of error for the sample of parents is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. It is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups. The survey was preceded by two focus groups each with parents and teachers. Selected survey results can be found at publicagenda.org. Public Agenda is a nonprofit organization dedicated to nonpartisan public policy research. Founded in 1975 by former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Daniel Yankelovich, the social scientist and author, Public Agenda is well respected for its influential public opinion surveys and balanced citizen education materials. Its mission is to inject the public’s voice into crucial policy debates. Public Agenda seeks to inform leaders about the public’s views and to engage citizens in discussing complex policy issues.

● *Source: Public Agenda Online, Reality Check 2006, Issue No. 4*

- ◆ Ask questions ahead of time (before the board meeting). Talk with the superintendent and other administrators if you have questions. Give them professional courtesy. Avoid surprises.
- ◆ Procrastination versus cautious deliberation. There is a difference.

Have courage.

- ◆ Exercise your authority; do not be intimidated or cajoled by others.
- ◆ How one disagrees is critical. Learn to agree to disagree.
- ◆ As a local official, you are bound to uphold the law.

Grow a second layer of skin.

- ◆ Have courage to resist.
- ◆ Let your priorities show.
- ◆ Develop a healthy skepticism for all information and requests from special interest groups.
- ◆ Don’t be afraid to take a big step. “You can’t cross a chasm in two small jumps.”
- ◆ There are a lot of “chasms” in public education today, and they required board members who have the courage to take the big step.

Nevertheless, savor the experience.

- ◆ Education is a human industry.
- ◆ Statistics are broken down into numbers. However, those numbers translate into faces – little faces, middle-sized faces, maturing faces, starry eyes, vacant eyes, perplexed brows, laughing mouths, stormy expressions.
- ◆ Visiting a school building may help with a decision. Be sure to contact the superintendent and schedule ahead of time. Avoid unannounced visits.

Keep your sense of humor.

- ◆ Kids and their education and welfare are what school board members are all about.

Ask yourself two questions that are critical and help in the decision making process.

- ◆ How will my decision impact the children of the district?
- ◆ What’s best for the children?

Training

- ◆ You can never get enough of it. It is available, so take advantage of it.
- ◆ Remember that the school board oversees the total system and does not become involved in the mechanics of operating the system.
- ◆ Board members have policy-making responsibilities, not administrative responsibilities.
- ◆ Working with a spirit of trust, confidence, respect and common courtesy, and maintaining open communication will go a long way toward successful board-superintendent relationships.

● *Source: Ohio School Boards Association Journal*

Check Out the Center for Public Education

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has developed a web site that provides a much-needed clearinghouse on educational issues, which can be a beneficial resource for school board members and superintendents across the state and the nation. It is part of a multi-pronged effort to raise the perception of public education and aims at providing accurate, timely, and credible information.

The Center for Public Education web site is a first step in producing information akin to that provided by many think tanks, particularly those in and around Washington, D.C., which attempt to influence public policy. Some of these groups are blatantly anti-public education and have produced information and provided resources for initiatives such as the pro-voucher movement.

The Center, recently established, is providing not only a more balanced viewpoint, but is doing so by publishing up-to-date research and analysis on current education issues. It also explores ways to improve student achievement and engage public support for public schools.

For example, the web site contains reports (and summaries of reports) on such issues as

- high school graduation rates,
- No Child Left Behind Act,
- standardized testing,
- community involvement,
- the achievement gap,
- class size,
- teacher quality, and
- high stakes testing.

Even though the Center provides information on best practices and is pro-public education, the published information also recognizes the challenges facing our schools. It provides helpful hints about tackling some of the most difficult issues facing our schools.

It is designed to be useful to citizens, parents, and the media, in addition to school board members and superintendents. The Center's mission is to "serve as America's one-stop shop for clear, concise, and trusted information about the nation's elementary and secondary public schools, leading to more understanding about public education, more community-wide involvement in public schools, and better decision-making by leaders."

The Center is a joint initiative of NSBA and the National School Boards Foundation. Many state school boards associations as well as corporations and individuals have provided donations to help build the Center. Since this is an important project for all those involved in school board leadership, there are still opportunities to donate in order to help strengthen the Center.

Visit www.centerforpubliceducation.org to see this beneficial new resource. We have used information from the Center and found it tremendously useful.

● *Source: NSBA - Adapted with permission from an article by Robert Rader, executive director, Connecticut School Boards Association, copyright 2006.*

NSBA Launches 'Pledge' Campaign

NSBA President E. Jane Gallucci joined with officials from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association in October to announce the launch of a national campaign to encourage Members of Congress to demonstrate their commitment to fundamental education goals by signing a Pledge to America's Schoolchildren.

At the joint conference of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, Gallucci told the press that "the Pledge to America's Schoolchildren is a nationwide, grassroots campaign designed to encourage Members of Congress to pledge their support for America's schoolchildren by signing their name to a pledge card." The pledge is being promoted to promote excellence and equity in public education through effective intergovernmental partnerships. NSBA does not endorse or oppose any political candidate.

Members of Congress across the country being asked to sign and vote to:

- ◆ Improve the No Child Left Behind Act to give local school districts better measures of student and school performance, and the support needed to close the achievement gap.
- ◆ Help school districts meet the needs of students with disabilities by supporting the funding goals of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.
- ◆ Support school readiness programs for children entering Kindergarten.
- ◆ Help school districts attract, train and retain highly qualified and effective teachers.
- ◆ And, help school districts provide all students with 21st Century skills and knowledge, including math, science and technology.

"Who would not want to sign a pledge to support programs they have already voted to create?" Gallucci asked during the press conference.

For details on the campaign, a copy of the pledge, and a list of pledge signers, please visit www.pledgetoamericasschoolchildren.org.

● *Source: National School Board Journal, NSBA*



\$100 checks (\$1,000 total) to be distributed to members during the Delegate Assembly.

The Policy Committee report was reviewed and the changes were accepted by the Delegate Assembly. The Resolutions report was reviewed and after much discussion it was accepted by the Delegate Assembly, too. For the full 2007 Legislative Program, see the NMSBA website, under "Legislative Update" the under the "Legislative Platform".

Prior to the Awards Banquet, Cooperative Educational Service (CES) sponsored a special "Vendor Appreciation Reception" that was enjoyed by all. The Awards Banquet was sponsored in part by American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) and they were given a few minutes to speak about this alternative licensing program. Those participating in the Leadership Development Program and earning 24 cumulative hours of training received the "Leadership Achievement Award" distinction and a certificate and lapel pin. Those earning 36 cumulative hours of training received the "Outstanding Leadership Award" distinction and a certificate and lapel pin. Two members, Victor Ortiz and Dorothy Armijo, both from Pecos Independent Schools received their embroidered "Master Board Member" blue blazers for achieving that distinction by earning 44 hours of cumulative training and presenting an additional four hours at conferences. For the second year, NMSBA recognized "Exemplary Award" recipients as those members earning 20+ training hours within the training year, September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2006. All certificates and pins were combined by district and available for pick-up at the end of the banquet or on Saturday at the registration desk. Those not picked up were mailed to the Superintendents.

For the 2006 Award Recognitions, Steve Harkey of Carrizozo was recognized as Board Member of the Year; Deming Public Schools BOE was recognized as the Board of Education of the Year; and the 24-Year Service Award was presented to Ruben Torres of Deming. There were no Hall of Fame nominations in 2006. Award recipient information for LDP and recognitions is provided in more detail on the NMSBA website under "Awards" at www.nmsba.org.

Also at the Awards Banquet, the Executive Officers roasted outgoing President Lilliemae Ortiz with humorous anecdotes that happened during her term of office. Lora Harlan, the incoming President attended the ceremony and accepted the President's gavel for the upcoming year and gave an address about the focus of her upcoming term – "Sweet Successes". See the "President's Message" on page 3 for more detailed information.

On Saturday morning, there were twenty-one breakout sessions offered for board members to receive relevant training. With the Master Board Member offering, up to seven hours of training were possible at this conference. ♦ERE

Supreme Court to Hear School Cases

The U.S. Supreme Court has granted review in *Zuni Public School District No. 89 v. Department of Education*, No. 05-1508, a case involving a challenge by the Gallup-McKinley County and Zuni school districts to New Mexico's public school funding formula and how it treats federal impact aid.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, in an evenly divided en banc vote, upheld the state's funding formula. In an en banc vote, all of the court's judges were present.

Pursuant to federal law, the two school districts receive federal impact aid that goes to districts hurt financially because of their limited ability to raise local revenue.

Much of the districts' areas lies on nontaxable acreage, such as American Indian reservations or national forests, which limits schools' ability to raise money through property taxes for school construction and renovation. Under the federal impact aid law, the state is permitted to offset its contribution to school districts by the amount of federal impact aid those districts receive.

However, the Zuni and Gallup-McKinley County contend the state took an inappropriate proportion of the federal money into consideration when determining the state aid amount.

Gallup-McKinley County Superintendent Karen White, whose district has been appealing the funding formula since 1999, says the state would owe the district over \$132 million in back payments if the challenge succeeds. The Zuni districts began the suit years ago over a state funding formula that took 95% of federal funds earmarked for local districts and redistributed them. The Gallup schools joined the lawsuit later and seeks to have the impact aid go to local districts.

NSBA filed an amicus brief October 10th asking the U.S. Supreme Court to retain its long-standing precedent of permitting school boards to exercise discretion over education policy matters and to preserve school board authority in promoting diversity.

On December 4th, the court will hear two cases involving student assignment policies aimed at creating schools with diverse student bodies – *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Crystal Meredith v. Jefferson County, KY, Board of Education*.

NSBA's brief argues that schools with diverse enrollments better prepare students for an increasingly diverse society and a competitive global economy.

The Seattle case involves a challenge to the district's use of a race-based "tie-breaker" system for assigning students to schools.

Students may choose schools, but if too many students select the same school, the system would give priority to students whose race would improve the school's diversity. In Jefferson County, the board adopted a "managed" choice system that allows students some choice of schools but also attempts to maintain black enrollment at 15 to 50 percent of a school's enrollment.

In both districts, parents sued to block the assignment plans because they claimed the plans penalized white students. Federal appeals courts upheld both plans.

● Source: NSBA Legal Clips

Want to know the latest on education? Check out the NSBA web blog "Board Buzz" <http://boardbuzz.nsba.org>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Board Institute
March 2-3, 2007
Eldorado Hotel
Santa Fe, NM

Celebrating Opportunities
for Hispanic Students
March 23-25, 2007
Albuquerque Hotel
Albuquerque, NM

School Law Conference
June 8-9, 2007
Albuquerque Hotel
Albuquerque, NM

Information will be available on the NMSBA website.
Go to www.nmsba.org, and from the homepage choose "Conferences"

Tidbits...

Utah school to fine student for being late to class

A new system of fines intended to boost attendance and reduce tardiness calls for students to pony up cash for showing up late to class. Starting with the third tardy or fourth absence, students have to buy tickets to go to attendance school. Tickets cost \$2 for being late to class and \$3 for missing class. Students spend the makeup time doing school work without food, drink and electronic devices. The policy is patterned after a similar program in another Utah district that saw attendance rates increase by 14 percent.

● *Source: Associated School Boards of South Dakota*

Young Americans say parents lack clear focus

A new national survey shows teens think adults do a lousy job of taking care of them. A child advocacy group annually asks teens across the country to rate adults' performance in everything from teaching positive values to their environmental efforts. This year's grades were poor, with adults averaging a C+ and scores dropping from last year's in nine areas. Moreover, adults received more F's than ever before. Nearly three in 10 teens gave failing or near failing marks to adults when it came to "really listening" to and understanding their teens.

● *Source: The Poughkeepsie Journal News*

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